

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of using a telephone device to allow a user to communicate with a remotely located entity, the telephone device including (i) a button which facilitates communication between the telephone device and the remotely located entity, and (ii) a wireless receiver, the method comprising:

(a) an object or a device connected to an object emitting a signal containing a telephone number of the remotely located entity;

(b) the wireless receiver receiving the signal emitted by the object or the device connected to the object; and

(c) the telephone device automatically establishing two-way communication with the remotely located entity upon selection by the user of the button, wherein selection of the button causes the telephone device to automatically dial the telephone number of the remotely located entity.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the object is a set-top box of a TV system, the method further comprising:

(d) the set-top box receiving the telephone number from broadcast signals sent over the TV system, wherein step (a) is performed by the set-top box emitting a signal containing the telephone number of the remotely located entity.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein the telephone device is a wireless telephone device having a base station in the set-top box, and the set-top box is hardwired to a telephone outlet, and wherein step (c) is performed by using the hardwired telephone outlet in the base station of the set-top box to establish two-way communication with the remotely located entity.

4. The method of claim 2 wherein the telephone device is a cellular telephone device, and step (c) is performed by using a cellular telephone network to establish two-way communication with the remotely located entity.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein the automatic establishment of two-way communication with the remotely located entity in step (c) occurs by:

(i) the telephone device automatically dialing the telephone number of the remotely located entity and communicating user identity information to the remotely located entity, and

(ii) the remotely located entity using the user identity information to initiate a call to the telephone device.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein the user identity information is the telephone number of the telephone device.

7. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

(d) the user engaging in an audio session with a person or machine at the remotely located entity upon establishing the two-way communication.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein the telephone device includes transceiver circuitry associated with normal telephone communication functions which is separate from the wireless receiver, and the two-way communication in step (c) uses only the transceiver circuitry.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein the object is an outdoor sign or billboard.

10. The method of claim 1 wherein the device connected to an object is a wireless transmitter connected to a television, the method further comprising:

(d) the television receiving the telephone number from broadcast signals received by the television, wherein step (a) is performed by the wireless transmitter emitting a signal containing the telephone number of the remotely located entity.

11. A method of using a telephone device to allow a user to communicate with a remotely located entity, the telephone device including (i) a button which facilitates communication between the telephone device and the remotely located entity, and (ii) a wireless receiver, the method comprising:

(a) an object or a device connected to an object emitting a signal containing an electronic address of the remotely located entity;

(b) the wireless receiver receiving the signal emitted by the object or the device connected to the object; and

(c) the telephone device automatically establishing communication with the remotely located entity upon selection by the user of the button, wherein selection of the button

causes the telephone device to automatically contact the electronic address contained within the emitted signal.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein the electronic address is a web site address of the remotely located entity, and selection of the button causes the telephone device to automatically go to the web site address of the remotely located entity.

13. The method of claim 12 wherein the telephone device further includes (iii) a display screen that displays content, the method further comprising:

(d) the web site of the remotely located entity displaying content on the display screen retrieved by the telephone device during the communication with the remotely located entity.

14. The method of claim 11 wherein the automatic establishment of two-way communication with the remotely located entity in step (c) occurs by:

(i) the telephone device automatically dialing the telephone number of the remotely located entity and communicating user identity information to the remotely located entity, and

(ii) the remotely located entity using the user identity information to initiate a call to the telephone device.

15. The method of claim 14 wherein the user identity information is the telephone number of the telephone device.

16. The method of claim 11 wherein the telephone device includes transceiver circuitry associated with normal telephone communication functions which is separate from the wireless receiver, and the communication in step (c) uses only the transceiver circuitry.

17. A method of using a telephone device to view content on a nearby display screen which is not physically connected to the telephone device, the telephone device including (i) a display screen which displays content, (ii) a button which facilitates communication of content between the telephone device and a local control device connected to the nearby display screen, and (iii) a wireless transmitter, the method comprising:

(a) storing content in the telephone device;

(b) displaying the content on the display screen of the telephone device;

(c) communicating the content from the telephone device to the local control device via a signal sent by the wireless transmitter upon selection of the button; and

(d) the local control device receiving the signal and providing the content to the nearby display screen for display thereon.

18. The method of claim 17 wherein the local control device includes a decoder, and step (d) further comprises the local control device using the decoder to convert the signal received from the telephone device into a format for viewing by the nearby display screen.

19. The method of claim 17 wherein the content shown on the telephone device display screen is a portion of a full content image, and step (d) further comprises providing the full content image to the local control device for display on the nearby display screen.

20. A method of using a telephone device to view content on a nearby display screen which is not physically connected to the telephone device, the telephone device including (i) a display screen which displays content, or a portion thereof, (ii) a button which facilitates communication of content between the telephone device and a local control device connected to the nearby display screen, and (iii) a wireless transmitter, the method comprising:

(a) storing content, or a portion thereof, and an electronic address of the content in the telephone device;

(b) displaying the content, or a portion thereof, on the display screen of the telephone device;

(c) communicating the electronic address of the content from the telephone device to the local control device via a signal sent by the wireless transmitter upon selection of the button;

(d) the local control device receiving the signal and transmitting a request over an electronic network to retrieve the content from a remote location; and

(e) upon receiving the content, the local control device provides the content to the nearby display screen for display thereon.

21. The method of claim 20 wherein the content shown on the telephone device display screen is a portion of a full content image, and step (e) further comprises providing the full content image to the local control device for display on the nearby display screen.

22. The method of claim 20 wherein the electronic address is a web site address, the remote location is a web site, and the electronic network is the Internet.

23. The method of claim 20 further comprising:

(f) retrieving the content, or a portion thereof, that is stored in the telephone device in step (a) from a remote source.

24. The method of claim 20 wherein the local control device further comprises a payment module which tracks usage charges for providing content to the nearby display screen, the method further comprising:

(f) the telephone device communicating customer identity information to the payment module; and

(g) the payment module inhibiting at least one of steps (c), (d) and (e) from occurring unless the payment module properly authorizes the telephone device to use the nearby display screen for viewing content.

25. The method of claim 24 wherein the customer identity information is the telephone number of the telephone device.

26. A method of using a telephone device to view content on a nearby display screen which is not physically connected to the telephone device, the telephone device including (i) a display screen which displays an electronic address of content, (ii) a button which facilitates communication of the electronic address between the telephone device and a local control device connected to the nearby display screen, and (iii) a wireless transmitter, the method comprising:

(a) the telephone device retrieving an electronic address of content from a remote source, and storing the electronic address in the telephone device;

(b) displaying the electronic address on the display screen of the telephone device;

(c) communicating the electronic address from the telephone device to the local control device via a signal sent by the wireless transmitter upon selection of the button; and

(d) the local control device receiving the signal and transmitting a request over an electronic network to retrieve content at the electronic address from a remote location; and

(e) upon receiving the content, the local control device provides the content to the nearby display screen for display thereon.

27. The method of claim 26 wherein the local control device further comprises a payment module which tracks usage charges for providing content to the nearby display screen, the method further comprising:

(f) the telephone device communicating customer identity information to the payment module; and

(g) the payment module inhibiting at least one of steps (c), (d) and (e) from occurring unless the payment module properly authorizes the telephone device to use the nearby display screen for viewing content.

28. The method of claim 27 wherein the customer identity information is the telephone number of the telephone device.

29. The method of claim 26 wherein the electronic address is a web site address, the remote location is a web site, and the electronic network is the Internet.

30. A method of using a wireless telephone device and a set-top box of a TV system to allow a user to communicate with a remotely located entity, the wireless telephone device including a button which facilitates communication between the telephone and the remotely located entity, the set-top box including a base station of the wireless telephone device, the set-top box being in communication with a telephone system and being connected to a television, the method comprising:

(a) the set-top box storing a telephone number and causes telephone number information to be displayed on the television; and

(b) upon selection by the user of the button, the telephone device sending a signal to the set-top box to dial the telephone number, thereby establishing two-way communication between the telephone device and the remotely located entity via base station and the telephone system.

31. The method of claim 30 further comprising:

(c) the set-top box prestoring a listing of telephone numbers corresponding to specified television stations, wherein the telephone number dialed in step (b) is the prestored telephone number of the currently active television channel.

32. The method of claim 31 further comprising:

(d) the television station automatically forwarding any received telephone calls to a telephone number of the remotely located entity.

33. The method of claim 30 wherein the establishment of two-way communication with the remotely located entity in step (b) occurs by:

(i) the telephone device sending a signal to the set-top box to dial the telephone number of the remotely located entity and communicating user identity information to the remotely located entity, and

(ii) the remotely located entity using the user identity information to initiate a call to the telephone device.

34. The method of claim 33 wherein the user identity information is the telephone number of the telephone device.

35. The method of claim 30 further comprising:

(c) the user engaging in an audio session with a person or machine at the remotely located entity upon establishing the two-way communication.

36. The method of claim 30 wherein the telephone system is external to the TV system.

37. The method of claim 30 wherein the telephone system uses the TV system for establishing and maintaining the two-way communication.

38. The method of claim 30 wherein the telephone number information is the telephone number stored at the set-top box.

39. The method of claim 30 wherein the telephone number information is a telephone icon which indicates that the telephone number stored at the set-top box will be dialed upon selection of the button.

40. The method of claim 30 wherein the telephone number information is the telephone number stored at the set-top box and a telephone icon which indicates that the telephone number stored at the set-top box will be dialed upon selection of the button.

41. The method of claim 30 further comprising:

(c) the set-top box receiving the telephone number which is stored in step (a) from broadcast signals sent by the TV system.